

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-10

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USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OC-05

CCO-00 OMB-01 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 SCCT-01 ACDA-05 /093 W

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6954

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN NY PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 13540

E.O.11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PINS, PLO, LE

SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN INVOLVEMENT IN RECENT BEIRUT CLASHES

1. SUMMARY: THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT AT LEAST LIMITED NUMBERS OF MAINLINE FEDAYEEN, FROM SEVERAL PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS, ENGAGED THE PHALANGE FORCES OCCUPYING THE INTERNATIONAL HOTEL DISTRICT (MINET AL HOSN) OVER THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS. WITH VERIOUS POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS IN TRAIN AND A NEW CASEFIRE AGREEMENT UNDER NEGOTIATION EVENING OCT 29, FEDAYEEN ROLE UNDER WENT DISCERNIBLE SHIFT BACK TO PACIFICATION, ALTHOUGH PALESTINIAN FORCES STILL IN KANTARI CAN BE EXPECTED TO RESPOND TO ANY PHALANGE PRESSURE FROM HOLIDAY INN (AND PERHAPS CONTINUE EFFORTS TO CUT THEM OFF THERE). WE PIECE THE STORY TOGETHER, INVOLVEMENT
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OF FEDAYEEN INITIALLY WAS DIRECT RESULT OF EXISTENCE OF MACHINERY

TO ENFORCE LONG FORGOTTEN CEASFIRE EARLIER IN ROUND FOUR.
IT DOES NOT RPT NOT FORESHADOW 'ARAFAT'S ABANDONMENT AT THIS TIME
OF RELATIVELY CONSTRUCTIVE POLICY HE HAS BEEN PURSING IN LEBANON.
END SUMMARY.

2. ON THE BASIS OF DATA FROM A NUMBER OF USUALLY KNOWLEDGE ABLE
OBSERVERS, GENERALLY LEBANESE OR FOREIGN NEWSMEN, THERE IS NO
QUESTION THAT REGULAR FADAYEEN FORCES HAVE BEEN
OPPOSING THE PHALANGE IN THE BATTLE FOR KANARI WHICH BEGAN SAT,
OCT 25. AS WE RECONSTRUCT EVENTS, THE DIRECT
PALESTINIAN INVOLVEMENT CAME ABOUT LARGELY AS A RESULT
OF THE PRESENCE OF FEDAYEEN FROM FATAH, SAIQA, THE PFLP, AND
THE PFLP-GC IN THE VICINITY AS PART OF A JOINT PALESTINIAN/
LEBABSE LEFTIST FORCE SET UP ABOUT ONE MONTH AGO TO ENFORCE
A CEASEFIRE (NO ONE REMEMBERS WHICH CEASEFIRE). THIS COMBINED
FORCE OF APPROX 750 MEN WAS DESIGNATED "AL QUWAT AL MUSHTARAKA
OR JOINT FORCES. WE UNDERSTAND THAT, ALTHOUGH THIS MOTLEY
BAND WAS NEVER EMPLOYED FOR THE PURPOSE INTENDED, IT CONTINUED
IN EXISTENCE AND OCCUPIED ITS TIME DEACTIVATING AND DISARMING
SEVERAL SMALL FREE-LANCE MILITIAS OPERATING IN NEARBY MUSLIM
DISTRICTS. ACCORDING TO ONE USUALLY WELL-INFORMED PALESTINIAN
SOURCE, THE "FALCONS OF ZAYDANIYEH" WERE ROTLED UP BY OCT 27
AND A SMALLER BAND (SOME 20 ODD ARMED MEN)
LED BY JAMIL AL HALABI (ALLEGEDLY A SAEB SALAM PROTEGE) WAS
ELIMINATED SEVERAL DAYS EARLIER.

3. FATAH SOURCES ARE PUTTING OUT THE STORY THAT THEIR FORCES
WERE INDEED IN THE AREA. BUT WERE PRESENT TO ASIST WITH THE
EVACUATION OF CIVILIAN RESIDENTS OF AFFECTED NEIGHBORHOODS.
THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT AT LEAST A PORTION OF FATAH'S STRENGHT
IN THAT LOCALITY WAS, IN FACT, ENGAGED IN RESCUE OPERATIONS
WE HAVE REASONABLY GOOD ONFORMATION THAT SHEIKH MICHEL KHOURY
WAS RESCUED BY FATAH FROM RESIDENCE AND SOLID TESTIMONY THAT
FATAH EVACUATED TRAPPED EMPLOYEES OF THE NEWS DIGEST, "ARAB
WOELD" THEY MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN PROTECTION OF SOME
ISOLATED AMERICANS.

4. NEVERLESS WE ARE CONVINVED THAT SOME FATAH ELEMENTS, LATER
REINFORCED, FOUGHT WITH OTHER PALESTINIANS AND LEBANESE
LEFTISIT TO WREST TERRITORY FROM THE PHALANGE. ONE PERSISTENT
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BUT UNCONFIRMED RUMOR MAKING THE ROUNDS IS THAT THE ENTIRE OPERATION
WAS UNDER THE COMMAND OF THE UBIQUITIOUS ABU DAOUD (DAOUD'
AUDA) OF FATAH. IT IS ALSO THE VIEW OF SEVERAL LOCAL OBSERVERS
THAT FATAH AND SA'IQA HAVE REACHED AT LEAST INFORMAL AGREEMENT
TO DIVIDE WEST (MUSLIM) BEIRUT INTO ZONES OF INFLUENCE. UNDER
THE CURRENT SCHEMA, FOR EXAMPLE, ZAYDANIYEH IS THE RESPONSIBILY
OF SA'IQI.

5. BEGINNING IN THE LATE EVENING OF OCT 29. A DISCERNIBLE CHANGE OCCURED IN THE POSTURE OF THE "MODERATE" PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATION PERHAPS IN CONNECTION WITH THE PRELIMINARY CONTACTS UNDER THE DIRECTION WITH THE PRELIMINARY CONTACTS UNDER THE DIRECTION OF PRIMIN KARAME TO ARRANGE A NEW CEASEFIRE, FATAH AND SA'IQA REVERTED TO THEIR USUAL ROLE OF ATTEMPTING TO CALM THE SITUATION AND SA'IQA CHIEFTAIN ZOHAYR MOHSEN, WHO ALSO HEADS THE PLO MILITARY DEPT, WAS PROMINENT IN ARRANGING MEETINGS WITH KARAME ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT WHICH WE RECEIVED LAST NIGHT, SA'IQA WAS PARTICULARLY ACTIVE IN THE SHIAH AREA, WHERE IT WAS ATTEMHTING TO EXTRACT A LEFTIST FORCE WHICH INFILTRATED AIN RUMANNEH AND WAS SUBSEQUENTLY SURROUNDED BY PHHALANGE REINFORCEMENTS FROM FURN ASH SHUBAK. ANNIHILATION OF THE ENCOMPASSED FORCE BY THE PHALANGE WAS, AT THAT TIME, THREATENING TO BLOW THE SHIAH FRONT SKY HIGHT

6. FEDAYEEN FORCES WERE NOT, OF COURSE, THE ONLY, OR EVEN THE MAIN PROTAGONISTS ON THE KARANTARI FRONT, ALTHOUGH THEIR PRESENCE ADDED A NEW AND DANGEROUS DIMENSION TO THE CLASHES THERE. WE BELIEVE THE BRUNT OF THE FIGHTING WAS CARRIED BY A COALITION OF LEFTIST GROUPS WHICH INCLUDED FOLLOWERS OF IBRAHIM QULEILAT ISSAM AL 'ARAB, THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF LEBANON (CPL), THE POPULAR SOCIALIST PARTY (PSP) OF KAMAL JUMBLATT, ETC, ONE INTERESTEDING RECENT PHENOMENON IS THE READINESS OF THE CPL TO BRING ITS PARTICIPATION OUT INTO THE OPEN (THE CPL DAILY AL NIDA, OF OCT 29 CARRIED A FRONT PAGE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DEATH OF TWO MEMBERS IN THE KANTARI FIGHTING). MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE, HOWEVER QULEILAT IS MERGING AS A FIGURE TO BE RECKONED WITH A FACT THAT PRIMIN JARAME TACTITLY ACKNOWLEDGED IN SUMMONING QULEILAT TO THE SERAIL AT 2230 HOURS OCT 29 FOR A PRIVAT TETE-A-TETE FOLLOWING THE DEPARTURE OF 'ARAFAT AND OTHER PALESTINIAN LEADERS. A WELL INFORMED OFFICER IN THE EGYPTIANN EMBASSY CONFIRMS OUT IMPRESSION OF QULEILAT'S RISING STAR AND ESTIMATES THE FORCE AT HIS COMMAND CONFIDENTIAL

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AT ABOUT 500 MURABBITUM OR MILITIAMEN AND ANOTHER 1,0#0 HANGERS ON. IT WAS ALMOST CERTAINLY QULEILAT'S INFLUNECE WHICH BROUGH AIN MRESSEH ADJACENT TO THE AMERICAN EMBASSY INTO THE FRAY, SINCE THAT QUARTER IS THE CRADLE OF THE QULEILAT FAMILY.

7. COMMENT:WE ARE NOT RPT NOT PREPARED, ON BASIS OF DATA AT PESENT AVAILABLE, TO CONCLUDE THAT "MODERATE" PLO LEADERSHIP HAS ABANDONED EFFORTS TO AVOID ENTANGLEMENT IN INTER-COMMUNAL STRIFE. OUR BEST ESTIMATE IS THAT PHALANGE ATTEMPT TO EXPEND TERRITORY UNDER THEIR CONTROL (PERSHPAS AS REACTION TO PERCEIVED THREAT OF MOVEMENT INTO IT BY MOSLEM FORCES. PROMPTED MOST RECENT STRUGGLE NEAR EMBASSY, ALTHOUGH RECORD ALSO SHOWS THAT REACTION OF PHALANGE OPPONENTS WAS WELL ORGANISED AND PROBABLY PLANNED IN ADVANCE. IT IS A FACT THAT PALESTINIAN "REJECTION"FRONT, WHICH HAS BEEN KICKING UP ITS HEELS IN KANTARI

(PFLP HAS PUBLICIZED) MARTYRDOM OF FOUR ADHERENTS, OF WHOM THREE WERE LEBANESE AND LEBANESE LEFT HAVE GREATER APPETITES THAN PLO "MODERATES". EGYPTIAN EMBASSY SOURCE CITED ABOVE FUNCTIONARIES OF FATAH INCREASINGLY INCLINED TO STRIKE OUT ON THEIR OWN AND IN DIRECTIONS WHICH CONTRADICT 'ARAFAT'S POLICES. HE STATED THAT EGYPTIAN GOV "KNOWS" THAT FOUR ARMED MEN WHO ATTACKED EGYPTIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON OCT 4,1975 (BEIRUT) 12562) WERE MEMBERS OF FATAH WHO ACTED WITH FULL KNOWLEDGE OF LOW LEVEL LEADERSHIP AND AGAINST ARAFAT'S INSTRUCTION (A CONCLUSION GENERALLY BORNE OUT BY ALL PUBLIC EVIDENCE WE HAVE SEEN). CONTINUING LEBANESE CRISIS, COUPLED WITH OTHER AREA STRESSES AND STRAINS THREATENS TO DRAW FEDAYEEN INTO BATTLE THEY DO NOT WISH AND HAS, AS ILLUSTRATED ABOVE, CORROSIVE EFFECT OF FATAH DISCIPLINE. FOR THESE REASONS, WE BELIEVE ARAFAT AND HIS SUPPORTERS WOULD LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN TO CALM LOCAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THEY OPERATE. IN MEANTIME OF COURSE, FATAH AND OTHER MODERATE FEDAYEEN WILL CONTINUE TO RESPOND WHEN THEY BELIEVE THEY ARE BEING ATTACKED.

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